

First record of Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus* for Ethiopia and sub-Saharan Africa

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Première mention de l'Étourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* pour l'Éthiopie et l'Afrique subsaharienne. Un Étourneau roselin *Sturnus roseus* a été observé en compagnie d'Étourneaux caronculés *Creatophora cinerea* et photographié à environ 50 km à l'ouest de Yavello, le long de la route vers Arba Minch (05°06'N 37°53'E), Éthiopie, le 23 mars 2005. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'Afrique subsaharienne de cette espèce paléarctique, connue pour son nomadisme et ses mouvements erratiques.

On 23 March 2005, whilst leading a birding trip in Ethiopia, I decided to stop for breakfast c.50 km west of Yavello, on the road to Arba Minch (05°06'N 37°53'E). While the guides and drivers were preparing the food, we birded in the area. At the edge of a small field that made a clearing in the dense bush, we found some perching Magpie Starlings *Speculipastor bicolor*. On the ground was a group of Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* with an odd individual. Compared to the Wattled Starlings, the other bird was very dark, almost black, with a very pale breast and belly and a yellowish bill. I immediately identified it as a Rose-coloured Starling *Sturnus roseus*, a species with which I had previous experience in Bulgaria, a country where I lead groups regularly. Henry Brousmiche, a member of the group, quickly took some photographs. Thereafter we were able to get closer, observe all the plumage details and obtain better photographs (Fig. 1, p. 76). After some 15 minutes, the bird flew away to the west with some of the group of Wattled Starlings.

Although broadly similar to the Wattled Starlings in size and shape, the bird appeared slightly smaller and slimmer, and the bill was slightly thinner. The head, neck and throat were glossy blackish, except the lores which were solid black. The blackish colour of the hindneck also reached the upper mantle, the rest of the mantle and the scapulars being paler, somewhat dirty whitish. The wings were relatively long and blackish, with slightly paler coverts. The medium-long tail was also blackish. The breast, flanks and upper belly were dirty whitish, with a pinkish (or salmon) tinge. The lower belly and vent were dirty blackish and the undertail-coverts pale brown dot-

ted black. The bill was yellowish orange, the legs pink. The bird foraged in a similar manner to the Wattled Starlings. This description matches an adult Rose-coloured Starling in non-breeding plumage (Cramp & Perrins 1994, Feare & Craig 1998).

This appears to be the first record south of the Sahara of this Palearctic species (Fry *et al.* 2000), which is nomadic and often erratic in its movements. Its main breeding range extends from the Balkans to Central Asia, and it migrates to the Indian subcontinent for the winter. Vagrants have been recorded in Western Europe, North Africa and Seychelles (Fry *et al.* 2000).

Acknowledgements

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References

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